

THE ISSUE ADDRESSED BY THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has resulted in the temporary occupation of a part of its territory.

Currently, almost

26%

of Ukrainian territory is controlled by the occupying power¹.

As of 2024, almost

1,6 million

Ukrainian children have become hostages of the occupying state².

Due to the ongoing temporary occupation, which has been lasting already for 10 years, Ukrainian education has sustained irreversible changes. The education has been completely ruined on the Crimean Peninsula and on the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, which form part of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Since 2022, it has also been dismantled on the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine within the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. Children living on these temporarily occupied territories have become subjects of the “Russian state re-education.” This “re-education” takes place within the Russian educational environment, where children are compelled to study according to the Russian standards, curricula and educational materials. Additionally, there is an extensive Russian system of “patriotic education” in place, aimed at shaping Russian civic identity, instilling Russian traditional values, militarizing the consciousness, and fostering a loyal attitude towards military actions carried out by Russia in Ukraine.

The provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law underline the unlawfulness of such actions of the Russian Federation.

Although the international law imposes a broad range of obligations on the occupying state, it does not absolve the sovereign state of responsibility. This includes its non-exemption from obligations to ensure accessibility to education for all citizens, as set forth in Article 39 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

That is why the issue of reintegrating children and young people who have been under occupation should remain a constant focus for both the government and society. All government policies regarding children and young people who have experienced the occupation should be implemented in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

1. V. Zelensky: About 26% of Ukraine’s territory remains occupied by Russia. Ukrinform. 5.02.2024: <http://surl.li/riang>

2. Data taken from official sources of the occupation administration of the Russian Federation and reports of Ukrainian authorities.

The Ukrainian authorities, civil society organizations and international partners are actively seeking ways to restore justice and prosecute those responsible. However, the unlawful practices of the Russian Federation towards Ukrainian education pose new challenges for the reintegration of a new generation of children raised in complete loyalty and willingness to serve in the Russian armed forces.

These Recommendations are based on the analysis of successful and unsuccessful policies for the reintegration of children and young people in countries that have confronted the consequences of wars and internal conflicts. They also include assessments of the relevance of these policies for overcoming the aftermath of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the Ukrainian context.

These Recommendations also take account of the results of discussions with representatives of Ukrainian student community, particularly young people from temporarily occupied territories who have moved to the territories under Ukrainian control having lived under occupation for various durations.

An efficient policy for the reintegration of children and young people who have been under occupation will contribute significantly to achieving the lasting peace.

Ukraine's experience should serve as an example to **encourage the international community** to further develop the appropriate mechanisms to protect children from ideological influence, and address the consequences of such influence not only during armed conflict, but also during peacetime.

CONDITIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY FOR REINTEGRATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN UNDER OCCUPATION

The formulation and implementation of reintegration policies must take account of the varying durations of people's lives under occupation. As the war persists, the duration of living under occupation increases, deepening the mental gap between those residing there and those living on the territories controlled by Ukraine. In addition, thousands of children were born (or will be born) under occupation. This new generation will have no experience of living on the free territories of Ukraine at all.

The effective implementation of the policy for reintegration of children and young people who have been under occupation depends on the successful application of the other components of the policy for reintegration of de-occupied territories and people living there. This includes legal, economic, and social aspects.

Breaking the Russian narratives poses perhaps the most significant challenge in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the influence of the Russian propaganda is countered through a comprehensive set of cognitive de-occupation measures in the areas of information, culture and education along with legal, economic, and social measures.

The Transitional Justice concept should be a guiding principle for the reintegration policy.

All components of the reintegration policy should be implemented synchronously and complement each other.

The success of reintegration processes is also subject to the level of trust, both in the government and among people with different war experience. It is necessary to provide for an equitable dialogue with society about the formulation and implementation of all components of the reintegration policy, especially those of conflict-generating nature. Such a dialogue will strengthen social cohesion and national resilience.

PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY FOR REINTEGRATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN UNDER OCCUPATION:

- priority of the policy for the government including guaranteed budgeting, proper monitoring, control and coordination of the policy implementation among all policy actors;
- non-traumatic nature of the policy formulation and implementation processes for children and young people, i.e. creation of a safe and friendly environment, use of appropriate therapeutic approaches and social practices for children and young people who have been under occupation, treating them as people who have experienced trauma;
- promotion of peace building and decrease in social polarization with the government being actively involved in encouraging dialogue and cooperation among individuals or groups with different personal philosophies, beliefs or identities;
- a child- and youth-friendly approach (mindful of their best interests), that provides for real and effective participation of children and young people in addressing issues of their concern, and prioritizing the best interests of the child;
- guaranteed representation of young people with different war experiences (those who were under occupation, those living on the territories under Ukrainian control, those evacuated to Russia and Belarus) in political negotiations, peace-building, transitional justice, and all the components of reintegration and reconstruction (recovery) policies);
- integrity, interrelatedness and synchronicity in the implementation of measures for the reintegration of children and young people;
- systematic and long-term nature of all policy measures;
- promotion and support of coordination between state and non-state policy actors;
- avoidance of discrimination and segregation during policy formulation and implementation;

- nurturing patriotism that unites children and young people around respect and love for their homeland, its history, culture and traditions;
- reintegration policy measures are not exhaustive; they should adapt to a specific situation based on the monitoring of the policy implementation.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1.

HIGH TRUST IN THE UKRAINIAN STATE AND ITS INSTITUTIONS AMONG THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE UNDER OCCUPATION

Operational objective 1.1.

Dispelling the myths and fears about the Ukrainian state and its institutions propagated by Russian propaganda

Task:

- approve a transparent and comprehensible national policy for the reintegration of children and young people who have been under occupation and restoration of the education system after de-occupation;
- approve a clear, rational and proportionate national policy regarding collaboration activities;
- approve a clear, rational and proportionate national policy on transitional justice, including purging (building trust in the authorities of the de-occupied territories);
- take all possible measures to prosecute those responsible for violations of international and national law in international jurisdictional bodies and foreign courts based on the principle of universal jurisdiction, and in Ukrainian courts;
- prepare and ensure the implementation of information, educational and awareness-raising campaigns to highlight events that occurred both during the temporary occupation by Russia of a part of Ukraine's territory and throughout the occupation.

Operational objective 1.2.

Elimination of obstacles to the continuation of education for children and young people who lived under occupation

Tasks:

- ensure, where possible, the recognition of educational achievements of people who lived on the temporarily occupied territories through an operational, transparent and understandable procedure;
- develop and ensure the implementation of an inclusive national education policy capable of encouraging children and young people from de-occupied

territories to attend additional educational disciplines, the teaching of which was either not provided or provided at an inadequate level by the occupation authorities.

Operational objective 1.3.

Building institutional capacity to close the education gaps

Tasks:

- ensure training of the teaching staff pool and other educational professionals competent to work in educational institutions on the de-occupied territories;
- promote and support coordination among the government, the Ministry of Education and Science and other stakeholders, including non-governmental and international organizations, in order to meet the unique educational needs of children and young people, and address gaps in the state provision.

Operational objective 1.4.

Equal conditions for all in the exercise of socio-economic rights

Tasks:

- develop and approve the leveling (positive discrimination) measures for children and young people who have been under occupation to exercise their rights, particularly (but not exclusively) by introducing quotas for enrollment in vocational and higher education institutions, and recognizing the educational achievements of individuals who lived on the temporarily occupied territories for their employment;
- facilitate the attraction of investments for the restoration and development of infrastructure on the de-occupied territories, promote job creation;
- encourage the establishment of specific youth-oriented programs, support youth initiatives at the level of local communities of the de-occupied territories, and facilitate their implementation involving children and young people living in these communities;
- develop and implement civic participation and responsibility programs for people on the de-occupied territories;
- support children and youth initiatives in setting up and operating their civic associations on the de-occupied territories.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2.**RESTORING CIVIC IDENTITY IN A TRAUMA-SENSITIVE MANNER****Operational objective 2.1.****Overcoming the consequences of Russian narratives. Changing a worldview****Tasks:**

- ensure continuous monitoring and clear identification of Russian narratives that change perspectives and contribute to the indoctrination of young people on the temporarily occupied territories (TOT); develop measures to counter these narratives and overcome their influence on children and youth;
- develop and implement educational and information products aimed at fostering critical thinking;
- review the content of formal education to introduce methodologies and content that facilitate a change in the worldview of children and young people in a trauma-sensitive manner without stigma and discrimination;
- facilitate the creation and dissemination of art based on personal stories of war victims (veterans, families, people who lived under occupation, prisoners of war and their families, and other people affected by the Russian-Ukrainian war);
- ensure the continuous operation of free psychological counseling in communities and educational institutions to reduce aggression levels and promote tolerant behavior among community residents, pupils and students;
- develop information and educational products (museums, film and radio productions, social advertising, thematic visits to memorial sites, etc.) with content focused on different age groups, addressing the crimes committed by Russia during the war and occupation;
- enable favorable conditions for children and young people from de-occupied territories to attend arts and culture events.

Operational objective 2.2.**Adaptation of the content of formal education to restore Ukrainian national and civic identity of people on the de-occupied territories and formation of a tolerant society****Tasks:**

- perform continuous monitoring of and record educational losses and civic competence gaps sustained during the years of occupation;
- analyze the content of educational programs and textbooks used for learning on the temporarily occupied territories to identify the sore spots of Russian propaganda and methods to overcome its consequences through education;

- develop special programs and methodologies for civic education and history of Ukraine that take account of the worldview of children affected by indoctrination and propaganda;
- ensure adaptation of the content of formal education, favoring an interdisciplinary approach; incorporate cross-cutting topics of tolerance, respect for human rights, and diversity into curricula and subjects;
- adapt the existing, develop new, and implement civic education programs aimed at combating social polarization (promoting understanding, preventing conflicts, developing dialogue and communication skills, etc.);
- prepare textbooks and educational materials to enable the restoration of the educational process under the law of Ukraine after de-occupation.

Operational objective 2.3.

Strengthening the role of informal education in building a tolerant society and lasting peace

Tasks:

- introduce extracurricular activities for the development of peace-building skills, teaching human rights, etc;
- introduce exchange programs for pupils, students and families with children and young people within Ukraine to confront pro-Russian narratives and broaden perspectives;
- enable systematic work with psychologists followed by joint visits to memorial sites and objects ruined by the Russian Federation;
- introduce the practice of joint study tours abroad for young people from the de-occupied and other territories of Ukraine (e.g., studying within the Human Rights House Network, visiting the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam);
- use trauma-sensitive and indirect themes to address sensitive topics, such as through the prism of Holocaust events (a platform recommended for starting human rights work);
- implement fact-finding visits to other regions of Ukraine for pupils and students to familiarize them with a region's history, culture, traditions and the war experience of its residents.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3.**OVERCOMING THE ANTAGONISTIC CONFRONTATION OF THE UKRAINIAN AND THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGES AS THE INSTRUMENT FOR FOMENTING INTERETHNIC HOSTILITY BY RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA****Operational objective 3.1.****Promoting respect for the Ukrainian language, culture, and history in families who lived under occupation in a non-traumatic way and without discrimination****Tasks:**

- provide for a “gentle” Ukrainization in all avenues of public life maintaining a balance between the need to know the national language and the free choice of the language of communication;
- facilitate the gradual integration of the Ukrainian language and culture into the daily lives of families that lived under occupation;
- enrich the information and cultural domain of the de-occupied territories with Ukrainian works of art, culture and literature;
- ensure the stocking of trade companies with Ukrainian-manufactured products and the naming of goods and services in the Ukrainian language;
- provide for the phased implementation of requirements for the knowledge of Ukrainian (while simultaneously enabling conditions to learn Ukrainian for free) to get an education, continue an education or get employed;
- promote cultural and educational exchanges, as well as other tours for children and young people from the de-occupied territories to other regions of Ukraine and abroad, and vice versa.

Operational objective 3.2.**Facilitate a gradual integration of the Ukrainian language into education, culture and information space of the de-occupied territories****Tasks:**

- ensure an ongoing operation of free Ukrainian language courses in every community;
- enrich the information and cultural domain of de-occupied territories with works of art, culture, literature and other learning/entertainment materials for children and young people in the Ukrainian language;

- ensure a gradual integration of the Ukrainian language into the teaching process;
- facilitate the reintegration of de-occupied territories into the national cultural life.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4.

PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION

Operational objective 4.1.

Combating negative stereotypes in society (among people from the territories under Ukraine's control) regarding people under occupation

Tasks:

- facilitate the creation and dissemination of works of art and information products based on personal stories of people who lived under occupation;
- expand the availability of free psychological counseling in communities to reduce aggression levels and promote tolerant behavior, etc.;
- ensure the development and dissemination of social advertisements aimed at dismantling the Russian narratives.

Operational objective 4.2.

Ensuring professional readiness, primarily of humanitarian institutions, to work with children and young people who lived under occupation

Tasks:

- provide training, even during the ongoing temporary occupation, for a personnel reserve:
- working with children, young people, and parents on the de-occupied territories, including skills to counter Russian narratives;
- social workers to engage with families that lived under occupation;
- healthcare professionals;
- psychologists;
- dialogue facilitators.

Operational objective 4.3.

Facilitate dialogue among children and young people with different war experiences to overcome the division into “us” and “them”

Tasks:

- introduce interregional (interschool, interuniversity) lessons on Ukrainian history;
- implement, as part of the educational process, student exchange programs between educational institutions on the de-occupied and non-occupied territories of Ukraine;
- organize interregional meetings of students with different war experiences for discussions, intellectual games on Ukrainian history, world history, literature, etc., and exchange of experiences of living amidst the war;

Operational objective 4.4.

Overcoming gender inequality and expanding peace building opportunities for young women and girls

Tasks:

- ensure performance of a gender-disaggregated analysis of measures outlined in the reintegration policy as well as potential outcomes of their implementation;
- support the initiatives aimed at addressing the special needs of representatives of different gender groups in the context of peace building and reintegration of the de-occupied territories;
- introduce training programs across educational institutions on the de-occupied territories to overcome gender stereotypes imposed by Russian propaganda.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5.

OVERCOMING MENTAL TRAUMAS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REHABILITATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DE-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Operational objective 5.1.

Enabling a safe space in communities

Tasks:

- set up a National Resource Center affiliated with one of the leading state universities for training and professional development of experts working with children and young people from the de-occupied territories;

develop and implement programs for psychologists working with families with children and young people;

- allocate funds from local and state budgets for the training and professional development of experts in psychological rehabilitation of children and young people from the de-occupied territories, as well as for the activities of resource groups at local educational institutions.

Operational objective 5.2.

Enabling a safe space in educational institutions

Tasks:

- set up resource groups for psychosocial support and mental health recovery for children, young people, and their families in educational institutions of the de-occupied territories;
- ensure the availability of a psychologist in every educational institution providing free-of-charge services to children, young people and their families;
- introduce art therapy into formal education program.

STRATEGIC GOAL 6.

MEMORIALIZATION AND MEMORY POLICY

Operational objective 6.1.

Shaping the modern history of Ukraine through personal experiences of those who lived through the war

Tasks:

- document the experiences of children and young people in the most trauma-sensitive manner possible;
- provide for the coverage of war events through personal stories without political bias;
- highlight various experiences of people who lived through the war based on “oral stories”, including those of soldiers, prisoners of war and their families, wartime medics, volunteers, internally displaced persons, individuals seeking temporary protection in European countries, people who lived under occupation, people who lived in the rear, civil activists, government officials, etc., without diminishing their experiences or stigmatizing them;
- set up a center for verified information on the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and other countries against Ukraine, the course of the Russian-Ukrainian war, occupation and liberation of Ukrainian territories, as well as on violations and crimes under national and international law accompanying these processes;

- develop and implement an up-to-date and comprehensive memory policy strategy.

Operational objective 6.2.

Shaping the memory policy through the involvement of children and young people in dialogue and public debate

Tasks:

- engage young people who lived on the occupied territories in public discourse on memory policy, establishment of memorial complexes and memory centers, and the documentation of events preceding and during the occupation;
- encourage students to conduct analytical research, conferences, and other scientific or public events related to the period of Russian occupation;
- promote the involvement of UNICEF, other UN agencies, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, etc., in the implementation of measures to ensure the right to truth for children and young people from the de-occupied territories of Ukraine and memorialization;
- ensure meaningful participation of children and young people in transitional justice processes.

STRATEGIC GOAL 7.

EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DE-OCCUPATION, REINTEGRATION AND PEACE BUILDING PROCESSES

Operational objective 7.1.

Enable conditions for the ongoing and proactive representation of children and young people in policy formulation and implementation processes at the local, regional, and national levels

Task:

- develop and implement instruments for the participation of children and young people in policy formulation and implementation at the local, regional, and national levels; participation in the political life of a community and the country;
- encourage budget allocation from local and state budgets to support youth dialogue initiatives and local processes addressing radicalization and conflict resolution;
- promote and support the operation of children and youth councils within local government authorities, as well as the establishment and functioning of children and youth civil society organizations (media, NGOs, informal platforms, etc.).

Operational objective 7.2.**Strengthening the role of communities and interregional cooperation in supporting children and youth initiatives****Tasks:**

- provide opportunities for the employment of young people in communities, offer professional support for students studying in relevant specialties, and promote the development of youth entrepreneurship;
- develop and implement measures to support youth initiatives in peace building, local economic development, science, innovation, etc.;
- facilitate interregional cooperation among communities, districts and regions to promote employment of young people, offer professional support for students studying in relevant specialties, and promote the development of youth entrepreneurship.

ACTORS involved in the formulation and implementation of the policy for reintegration of children and young people

- territorial communities, local government authorities;
- public authorities;
- educational, research and cultural institutions;
- adults who were children during the occupation, families, children and young people;
- civil society organizations including youth and children non-governmental organizations, informal civic initiatives (networks, platforms, associations);
- employers' organizations, trade unions, associations of employers' organizations, associations of trade unions;
- media;
- international organizations, governments of partner countries;
- non-governmental international organizations;
- business entities.

since 2011 from
Ukrainian Crimea

Our Mission

We are approaching the
reintegration of the population
of the de-occupied territories
and laying the foundations for
guarantees of non-repetition.

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